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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: IRAQ; MIDDLE EAST

IRAQ

[1](#)1. "Bush's 16 words"

The conservative National Post opined (7/22): "...As things stand, the pro-and anti-Bush camps sit at a sort of stalemate, both sides waiting for the leak that will definitively vindicate their version of events. But it is more likely the brouhaha will end with an inconclusive anticlimax, one whose ultimate effect is to vindicate the President. Far from being a scandal 'worse than Watergate,' or an effort to deliberately 'mislead' the public, the State of the Union glitch seems to have resulted in large part from the interplay between an overzealous, but well-intentioned, White House staffer and an insufficiently assertive, but equally well-intentioned, CIA analyst.... [T]here is every reason to expect the false scandal surrounding Mr. Bush's January speech will subside. Enemies of the President may find an issue to bring him down in the 2004 election. But it won't be this one."

[1](#)2. "The tragic cost of a rash Iraq war"

The liberal Toronto Star editorialized (7/22): "British scientist David Kelly should be alive today. But like thousands of others, he has become a casualty of the American/British rush to make war on Iraq.... Blair has ordered a judicial probe of this tragedy, seeking to absolve his government of blame. But he already has lost the public's confidence.... In Washington, U.S. President George Bush is also under siege for exaggerating Saddam's nuclear ambitions to justify war. His support is fading. There is a savage irony in this postwar blame game. Tragic as his death is, Kelly is just one victim of Bush's obsession with 'regime change' in Baghdad, and Blair's eager compliance. Some 275 American and British troops have also died, along with more than 8,500 Iraqi civilians and military. They are the other casualties in Bush's drive to 'save' the world from weapons of mass destruction that Washington has yet to produce. The American taxpayer, meanwhile, is on the hook for more than \$60 billion for the war and \$1 billion a week since.... This is a mess, and a fearsome price for a war that U.N. inspectors cautioned against from the start. They loathed Saddam's vicious regime. But they believed, rightly, that sanctions were working. That Baghdad was contained. That there was no need to rush to war. They were right."

[1](#)3. "Through the fog of war"

Contributing foreign editor Eric Margolis observed in the conservative tabloid Ottawa Sun (7/20): "...As the furor in Washington grows over Bush's admission of now-discredited claims about Iraqi uranium imports from Africa in his keynote state of the union address, administration officials are viciously blaming one another... Blame rightly belongs to Bush himself, and to his woefully inadequate national security adviser, Condoleezza Rice. Either they knew the uranium story was false, or they were unfit for high office. For one thing, uranium ore is no more threatening than cake mix.... Bush's crusade against Iraq was designed to assuage Americans' fury and fear over 9/11 by making Saddam Hussein a whipping boy for the attack in which he had no part. The jolly little wars against Afghanistan and Iraq were also designed to make Americans forget the Bush White House had been caught with its pants down by 9/11, and was asleep at the switch in the Enron financial disaster. Who now remembers that Attorney General John Ashcroft actually cut spending on anti-terrorism before 9/11, or that Washington was giving millions to the Taliban until four months before 9/11? How better to get Americans to support a war than by insinuating, as did Bush, that Iraq was responsible for 9/11, and claiming Saddam was about to attack the U.S. with weapons of mass destruction? A pre-emptive attack on Iraq was urgent to save America, insisted Bush. A weak-kneed Congress and credulous public went along with White House warmongering, while the spineless UN secretary general, Kofi Annan, and UN arms inspector Hans Blix wriggled like jellyfish. Most Democrats, including some

presidential candidates, joined Bush's lynch mob.... A torrent of lies poured from the administration, all aimed at justifying a war of aggression, thwarting the UN Security Council, ending UN inspections in Iraq and grabbing Iraq's oil riches. Virtually all administration claims about Iraq's weapons had been disproved by UN inspectors before Bush went to war.... And the biggest canard of all: Bush's absurd claims there was 'no doubt that the Iraq regime continues to possess and conceal some of the most lethal weapons ever devised,' and that it 'threatened all mankind.' Thanks to the shameful complicity of the U.S. media, which amplified White House propaganda, Americans were led to believe Iraq attacked the U.S. on 9/11, and was in league with al-Qaida. Bush's faux war on terrorism was redirected, by clever White House spin, into a hugely popular campaign against Iraq. The failure to kill terrorist leader Osama bin Laden was covered up by the rush to kill Saddam. The litany of lies produced by the White House and its neo-con allies would be farcical were it not for the deaths of so many Americans and Iraqis. Of course, all politicians lie. But lying to get one's country into an unnecessary war is an outrage, and ought to be an impeachable offence."

[14.](#) "Intelligence blunder"

Under the sub-heading, "War in Iraq was justified, but misleading public was not," the right-of-center Calgary Herald commented (7/22): "The fact that weapons of mass destruction have not yet been found in post-war Iraq is a sore spot for those who supported the war. But the recent public furor in the U.S. and Britain over inaccurate intelligence reports shows that half the truth is worse than a whole lie.... Historians may forgive Bush's and Blair's use of hyped-up intelligence reports, but voters tend to be far less forgiving. It is not yet clear whether the world is a safer place now with Saddam out of Iraq, but Americans and Britons have good reason to be less trusting of their leaders."

[15.](#) "Where are WMDs?"

The conservative tabloid Winnipeg Sun (7/15) remarked: "It's a simple question for U.S. President George Bush to answer: Where are Iraq's weapons of mass destruction (WMD) - whether nuclear, chemical or biological?... Iraq's WMD - not its WMD program, a word now starting to enter the Bush/Blair vocabulary - was the main justification for this war. We believed it was a valid one.... The moral justification the coalition gave for invading Iraq was that it was, in effect, an act of self-defence because of Iraq's WMD, Saddam's proven willingness to use them and his known support of terrorism. If the coalition cannot produce convincing evidence of the WMD it said Iraq had, the moral case for launching a pre-emptive war will have been fatally undermined."

MIDDLE EAST

[16.](#) "The real 'road map' lies behind the scenes"

Ottawa Citizen contributor David Warren wrote in the conservative National Post (7/19): "...The Israel-Palestine negotiations are a U.S. State Department task, and the Secretary of State, Colin Powell, is the chief ball-carrier. But the team behind him is remarkable, both for its informality and small size. President Bush's idea was to keep it this way on purpose: to avoid creating the kind of institutional force field that pushes problems further away as it advances toward them, keeping them insoluble. He has instead created the diplomatic equivalent of one of the Pentagon's special forces, which go in and out of hot spots without embedded reporters.... The sort of real problems that are being dealt with behind the scenes, by truly tireless multi-person shuttle diplomacy, include the intifada legacy of Palestinian terror cells and media incitement, on the one side; and specific, over-visible Israeli security measures, on the other. It is less like a constitutional progression toward a new Palestinian state, and more like a protracted mutual disarmament and disengagement between two already existing governments. The point is to snuff out the intifada, and the Israeli response to the intifada, while building a new, and co-operative, security arrangement between the two sides, modelled specifically on that which already exists between Israel and Jordan. While I'm going out on a limb to write this, I think the grander, operative questions of border drawing and refugee settlements are already answered, or more precisely, mutually assumed.... It remains, unfortunately, in Yasser Arafat's interest to wait for his moment to blow everything up - since his own power increases with conflict and diminishes with peace. It is an elaborate game getting him and keeping him sidelined - one that's still being played. And the

Europeans, led by the French, continue to indulge the soft-headed and immodest policy of throwing him diplomatic lifelines, by publicly recognizing him in defiance of U.S. pressure. That is the chief external thing getting in the way."

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